

CHAPTER 6. LEAVES, HOURS OF WORK AND EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT

SUBCHAPTER 5. PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

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4A:6-5.1 General provisions

(a) In local service, an appointing authority may establish an employee performance evaluation program. A performance evaluation system must be reviewed and approved by the Department of Personnel in order to be used in promotions or layoff.

(b) In State service, a Performance Assessment Review (PAR) program shall apply to all employees in the career service, and those in unclassified titles as designated by particular departments or agencies.

1. While not mandated, departments and agencies are encouraged to include all unclassified titles in the PAR program.

2. The PAR program shall use standardized forms and rating scales for different performance appraisal models to be designated by the Department of Personnel and a three-level rating scale to include the following ratings:

- i. Exceptional;
- ii. Commendable; and
- iii. Unsatisfactory.

3. Each agency shall establish standardized rating cycles with a duration of one year. Within a particular standardized rating cycle, employees shall be rated at the same time, twice a year, with the interim and final ratings being six months apart.

(c) Each appointing authority shall maintain an employee's PAR evaluations in his or her personnel records and shall submit reports to the Department of Personnel on all final PAR ratings of its employees in a form prescribed by the Department.

(d) The Commissioner may modify the PAR program based on specific employee or agency needs.

4A:6-5.2 PAR procedure: State service

(a) An employee and his or her supervisor shall jointly develop a job performance plan consisting of work assignments together with measurable performance standards. The employee shall be provided with a copy of the performance plan once established. If an employee disagrees with the established performance plan, he or she may note such disagreement.

(b) At the end of six months and at the end of one year, the employee and the supervisor shall review the employee's performance. The supervisor shall designate an interim performance rating at the end of six months and a final rating at the end of one year.

1. When there is a change either in job assignment or supervisor during the evaluation period, the old performance plan shall be closed out. The employee's performance during the portion of the rating period under the old performance plan shall be rated and a new performance plan shall be prepared. The final rating shall be a proration of all ratings received during the review period.

2. When there is a change in job title during the evaluation period, the former supervisor shall assign a final rating for the former performance plan and title. A performance plan for the new title shall be developed.

3. When appropriate, performance improvement plans shall be set at each review.

4. The employee shall be entitled to a copy of the rating.

(c) When a rating below the Commendable level is received, a performance conference shall be conducted after three months or such shorter period of time as determined by the supervisor.

(d) A performance plan for each rating period shall be established within a reasonable time after completion of the previous rating period. New employees shall receive a performance plan within a reasonable time after appointment.

1. The supervisor shall prepare a job performance plan prior to the commencement of the working test period which shall identify the job assignment, include the essential criteria for successful job performance, and emphasize training and development.

(e) A supervisor's own PAR shall provide that the supervisor shall complete the PAR of his or her subordinates. A supervisor who fails to timely complete the final ratings of his or her subordinates, or who is responsible for another employee's failure to timely complete a final PAR rating, shall receive a rating of Unsatisfactory, and may be subject to discipline.

(f) The Department of Personnel may require additional reports, information or audits of an agency's PAR program.

(g) A complaint that an entire agency or unit is in violation of this subchapter shall be presented to the PAR coordinator within the personnel office for the subject department. The PAR coordinator shall, within 30 days, investigate the complaint, respond in writing to the individual(s) presenting the complaint and implement remedial action as appropriate. If the individual(s) is (are) dissatisfied with the response of the PAR coordinator, or if no action has been taken within 30 days of the complaint, the individual(s) may appeal the matter to the PAR Program Coordinator, Department of Personnel.

(h) Complaints concerning an individual's final PAR rating or performance standards shall be addressed through procedures set forth in N.J.A.C. 4A:6-5.3(b) through (d).

4A:6-5.3 PAR use and review: State service

(a) An employee receiving an annual PAR rating below the Commendable level shall be denied an anniversary date increment.

1. An appointing authority may request an anniversary date increment for an employee who was denied an increment because of receiving an Unsatisfactory rating but whose performance has subsequently improved. If approved by the Department of Personnel, such increment shall not be effective until a pay period beginning at least 90 days after the employee's anniversary date.

2. An employee who receives an annual rating below the Commendable level should be referred by the appointing authority to the Employee Advisory Service. See N.J.A.C. 4A:6-4.10.

(b) Employees who are not represented by a collective negotiations unit may appeal performance standards or a final PAR rating of Unsatisfactory or Commendable through noncontractual grievance procedures. See N.J.A.C. 4A:2-3.1. In addition to the grievance procedure requirements, all appeals shall be accompanied by a copy of the PAR evaluation.

(c) Employees who are represented by a collective negotiations unit may appeal performance standards or a final PAR rating of Unsatisfactory or Commendable as a noncontractual grievance in accordance with the following procedures:

1. Step One grievance procedures shall be conducted as set forth in N.J.A.C. 4A:2-3.4.

2. A grievant may appeal a Step One grievance decision to the PAR Joint Union Management Panel within 10 calendar days of receipt of the written decision at Step One, or a lack of timely response by the appointing authority. The appeal shall be accompanied by material presented at Step One and any written records or decisions from Step One.

i. The Joint Union Management Panel shall consist of one individual selected by the appointing authority, one individual selected by the affected negotiations representative and one neutral individual jointly selected by the appointing authority and the affected negotiations representative.

ii. The panel shall meet, provided there are at least four Second Step appeals to be heard. The panel shall meet one additional day each month for every four additional appeals to be heard. When in any month there is no meeting because there are fewer than four appeals to be heard, there shall be a meeting the following month, so long as there are any cases to be heard.

iii. The appointing authority and union panel members shall discuss each appeal on the agenda and, with the assistance of the neutral panel member, attempt to jointly resolve the appeal.

iv. If the appointing authority and union cannot come to a joint resolution, the appeal shall be heard by the full panel. At any Second Step appeal hearing, the employee may be represented by a union steward, local union officer and/or local union staff representative.

v. The parties may call witnesses and present evidence at the Second Step appeal hearing. However, each hearing shall conclude within approximately four hours. The neutral panel member shall control the admission of testimony and evidence to ensure adherence to this time frame.

vi. The panel shall issue a written decision within 10 days of the hearing. Each panel member shall have one vote.

3. Appeals from decisions of the Joint Union Management Panel may be made to the Department of Personnel in accordance with N.J.A.C. 4A:2-3.7(b).

(d) An employee may appeal the final departmental decision to the Merit System Board within 20 days of receipt of the decision.

1. The appeal shall be in writing and include a copy of the written departmental decision and the basis for the appeal.

2. The employee shall have the burden of proof to establish that the actions of the supervisor in assigning the rating were arbitrary, unreasonable or induced by improper motives.

3. The Board shall render a final administrative decision upon the written record or such other proceeding as it deems appropriate. See N.J.A.C. 4A:2-1.1.

(e) A rating of Unsatisfactory shall constitute evidence of incompetency, inefficiency or failure to perform duties. In a disciplinary action, an employee may challenge the basis of any rating that is an issue in the proceeding.

(f) Performance ratings may be used as a factor in promotion (See N.J.A.C. 4A:4-2.15) and layoff (N.J.A.C. 4A:8-2.2(c)4).